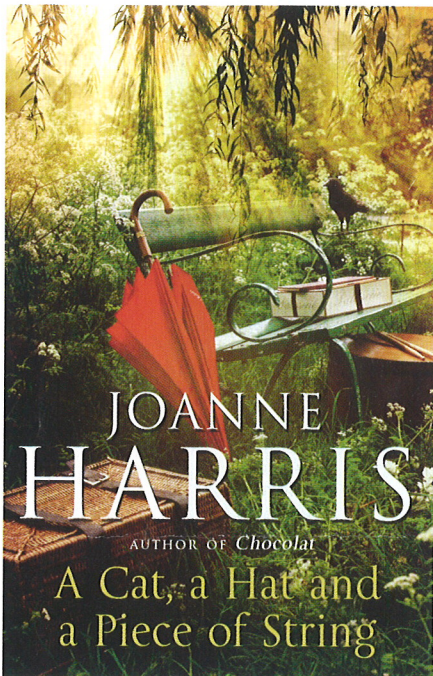


BOOKS

BEDTIME READING TO MAKE AN EARLY NIGHT ESSENTIAL

Books thumbed and reviewed by **KATIE ALLEN**



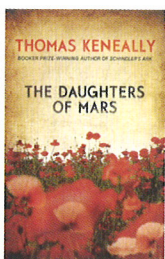
A Cat, a Hat and a Piece of String

Joanne Harris (*Doubleday*)

OPEN ANY JOANNE HARRIS BOOK and you will lose yourself. Her trademark delicious descriptions and evocative storylines are all presented here in an entertaining new collection of short stories, which hops skillfully from genre to genre, by spooking and soothing.

Fans of Harris' magical bestseller *Chocolat* will love the gothic fairytales such as *Cookie*, about a grieving woman who conjures a baby out of 'sugar and spice' or *Dee Eye Why*, where a man falls in love with a ghost family. Surprises will be found in *The Game*, a twisty tale of teenage obsession with computers.

Meanwhile, two gems of the collection are devoted to Faith and Hope, the indomitable old ladies first seen in Harris' *Jigs & Reels*. With *Reading Faith* and *Hope Get Even*, it's difficult not to grin in delight as the women exact their witty revenge on bullying retirement home staff. Harris explains that the title is a list of the three things she would take to a desert island. I'd advise you to take this book.

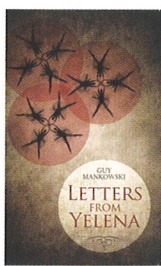


DAUGHTER OF MARS
Thomas Keneally
(*Sceptre*)

THE BOOKER PRIZE-WINNING author Thomas Keneally's new novel is set during

the First World War and follows two Australian nurses, sisters Naomi and Sally, who sign up to serve on the battlefields, half a world away. Uneasily united by a shared secret, the sisters each face death, disease and the horrors of trench warfare.

Inspired by real diaries, *Daughters of Mars* is a vibrant epic of effortless scope and humanity, which is lifted further by its dynamic heroines. It will take your breath away.

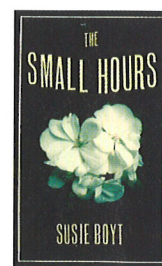


LETTERS FROM YELENA
Guy Mankowski
(*Legend Press*)

THIS EPISTOLARY NOVEL takes the always present fascination with the torments of

ballet dancers, from *The Red Shoes* to *Black Swan*, and adds a bit of a romantic twist.

Russian ballerina Yelena has come to the UK to dance the tragic role of Giselle. Meanwhile, she strikes up a correspondence with a writer, and, with their letters, Mankowski brings every bruised foot and strained limb to life as Yelena struggles to make a name for herself - finding herself sinking under the pressure.



THE SMALL HOURS
Susie Boyt
(*Virago*)

THIS FASCINATING NOVEL is penned by the great-granddaughter of

Sigmund Freud. Therefore, it is apt that the protagonist of her novel is 38-year-old Harriet, who is emerging cautiously from a decade of therapy.

Described as "a red-haired, earthbound woman of six foot one", Harriet has come into an inheritance, and is determined to open the school of her dreams. But as her plans unfold, Harriet is forced to face her own upbringing. Susie Boyt has written a dark, yet comic and redemptive story.